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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the attitudes of primary school children in Friesland, the Netherlands' only bilingual province, toward Frisian, the minority language. Subjects were 142 pupils, 46 Dutch-speaking and 96 Frisian-speaking, from four primary schools in small villages. Sixty-nine of the children were in grade 5 and 73 were in grade 8, with an age level of approximately 9 and 12 years old. Two methods were used to assess pupil attitudes, including: (1) a 10-item Likert scale dealing with Frisian at school, oral use of Frisian, symbolic value of Frisian, a global evaluation of Frisian, Frisian on television, and pupil feelings of ethnicity; and (2) response to 4 language fragments using the matched-guide technique. The younger children's general command of the language was assessed with a cloze test. Analysis of the results confirm earlier findings about children's attitudes toward prestige and solidarity in relation to standard and non-standard languages. The Frisian-speaking children were neutral about their language, and the Dutch-speaking children were strongly negative. Frisian-speaking students' attitudes became less favorable as they became older, perhaps reflecting a shift in perception of Frisian's solidarity value. Boys judged the status of Frisian as lower than the girls perceived it. Further research is recommended. A 21-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

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School Children's Language Attitudes in Friesland

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1. INTRODUCTION

The present study deals with primary school children's attitudes towards Frisian. Before going into this subject, I shall first give some background information about language relationships in the province of Friesland and say a few words about bilingual schooling in this province.

Friesland is the only bilingual province in The Netherlands. The province has nearly 600,000 inhabitants. An estimated 400,000 speak Frisian. It has been found that of the provincial population 94 percent can understand the language, 73 percent can speak it, 65 percent is able to read Frisian and 10 percent can write in the language (Gorter et al., 1984). Frisian has a formal status, as it is acknowledged by the Dutch Government. The provincial government conducts an active language policy. Although written Frisian is fully standardized, it takes only a minor place in the province. This can be seen from the finding that only less than 5 percent of the text in the two existing provincial newspapers is in Frisian.
Since 1980, Frisian has been an obligatory subject in the primary schools in the province, and it is permitted as a medium of instruction in all grades. However, schools can easily meet the requirement to teach Frisian, as neither the content and goals of the subject nor the amount of time spent on it are legally prescribed. In practice, most primary schools teach Frisian for one lesson per week. In almost 80 percent of the primary schools Frisian is used as a medium of instruction, albeit to a varying degree.

It will be clear that the minority language and the majority language, Frisian and Dutch respectively, have an unequal position in the province. This unbalanced situation will have an impact on the inhabitants' language behavior and more specifically on their language attitudes, because language attitudes tend to reflect the social conventions within a speech community (cf. Giles et al., 1987: p.585).
There are fairly reliable data on the attitudes towards Frisian of the provincial inhabitants (Gorter et al. 1984; Gorter and Ytsma, 1988), but there is no systematic knowledge about children's attitudes towards Frisian. This state of affairs is certainly not unique, as there has not been much research on children's language attitudes elsewhere. This is specially true for language areas where an indigenous minority language is spoken.
Yet there have been a number of studies on children's language attitudes. A short overview of some studies on children's language attitudes will be presented here as background for the present study. This overview concentrates on studies about primary school children's language attitudes.

In a number of studies it was shown that older children develop less favourable attitudes towards the minority language and more positive attitudes towards the majority language. Cremona and

Bates (1977), for instance, investigated children's preferences for sentences spoken in standard Italian or in the Valmontonese dialect. Subjects were Valmontonese speaking Italian children between the ages of 6 and 10 years of age. They attended a school in which speaking the dialect was explicitly discouraged. The children listened to sentences spoken in dialect and in Italian. They were instructed to decide "Which one spoke better"? It turned out that preference for Italian sentences increased from 50 percent in grade one to almost 100 percent in grade three. In conclusion, the standard language was upgraded as the pupils became older.

A similar developmental pattern was found by Giles et al. (1983) among children who spoke the dominant language at home. Giles et al. carried out a matched-guise study on the attitudes of standard English speaking children from Bristol towards Welsh-accented English and RP (Received Pronunciation). The age range was 7-10 years. The results showed that as the children became older, they preferred RP on the competence trait 'successful'. Interestingly, the youngest children evaluated the Welsh-accented variety as 'funny' (meaning strange), whereas the oldest children recognized the positive connotations of this variety.

In contrast to the pattern which was underlined by the above-mentioned studies, Price et al. (1983) showed that minority language speaking children can evaluate the minority language as favourably as the majority language. They investigated, among other things, the attitudes towards Welsh, Welsh-accented English and RP (Received Pronunciation) among Welsh-English children between the ages of 10 and 12 years. The most important finding was that Welsh and RP elicitated similar (positive) reactions on a matched-guise task, while the Welsh-accented guise was evaluatively denigrated.

Lambert et al. (1976) also found that minority language speaking children positively evaluated speakers of their language. They report that French-American ten-year-olds from the state of Maine reacted just as favourably to the French varieties as to the English varieties on a matched-guise task. The home and/or school environment might be responsible for the children's positive attitudes towards the French language, as the attitudes of adults living in the same area were also proved to be positive.

In an earlier study, Lambert et al. (1975) clearly demonstrated the influence of school programs on school children's language attitudes. Ten year old French-American children who had followed an intensive bilingual program at school were much more favorably disposed towards French than the 'No Program' children. The latter were even strongly Anglo-oriented in their reactions on a matched-guise task.

Schneidermann (1976) also observed that children who spoke a minority language at home were favourably disposed towards the home language. She found that French-Canadian primary school pupils (age 10) in Welland (Ontario), who spoke only English outside the classroom (sic), gave preference to a French speaking puppet. Thus, although English clearly had an instrumental value for these children, they were loyal to their own ethnic group.

Schneidermann (1982) also pointed out that there were sex and age related differences. Girls clearly preferred the French speaking puppet at all age levels whereas the attitudes of the boys developed from 'pro-English' in Kindergarten, via neutral in grade one, to preferring the French puppet after grade one.

Recently, there has also been some research on primary school children's attitudes in The Netherlands. The children were dialect speakers or members of the allochtone minorities in The Netherlands (mostly Turks and Moroccans). Two research projects included both subject groups and these will be briefly described here.
The first Dutch study is the one of Van Hout et al. (1989). They studied the evaluation of standard Dutch by allochtone (Turkish and Moroccan) and (a Dutch) dialect-speaking primary school children (7th grade). The dialect-speaking children had little appreciation for the dominant standard language, whereas the allochtone children appreciated Dutch. Both groups had a strong instrumental orientation towards Dutch, but the dialect speakers scored low on integrative orientation towards the dominant language.
The second Dutch project which will be briefly discussed was carried out by Kerkhoff (1988; Kerkhoff et al., 1988). Kerkhoff's study dealt among other things with the attitudes towards standard Dutch and the home language (-variety) among dialect-speaking and allochtone primary school children. Attitudes were directly measured (questionnaire) as well as indirectly measured (matched-guise). Direct measurement revealed that the allochtone children had a favourable attitude towards Dutch, and also towards their own language. In contrast, the dialect-speaking children evaluated standard Dutch negatively, whereas they had a positive attitude towards the covert prestige of their own dialect. The matched-guise results showed that both groups of children acknowledged the high status value of Dutch. However, the dialect-speaking children preferred their own variety in terms of 'attractiveness' and 'reliability'.

In conclusion, the above overview indicates that primary school children who speak a minority language, or a low status variety at home, can be both positively and less favourably disposed towards their own language (-variety). It also turns out that the attitudes towards minority languages or low status varieties among children who speak the majority language as their mother tongue have less frequently been traced.
In view of the studies mentioned above, the present study deals with primary school children's attitudes towards Frisian. The first aim of the study is to relate the children's language attitudes to their linguistic background. Secondly, age and sex differences regarding their attitudes towards Frisian will be explored.
The study of language attitudes is not solely a matter of academic interest. Attitudinal variables may also relate to (second) language acquisition (cf. Gardner, 1985; Dulay and Burt, 1977). Therefore, the relation between the pupils' language attitudes and their general command of the Frisian language (as measured by a cloze test) will finally be briefly touched upon.

2. METHOD

2.1 *Subject group*

One hundred and fifty-six pupils from four primary schools participated in the study. The schools were located in small villages in the Frisian countryside. During the last few decades there has been a considerable inmigration of Dutch speaking people in this area.
The subject group consisted of 46 Dutch speaking children and 96 Frisian speaking children. The other 14 pupils came from mixed language families. Because of the small number of children with a mixed linguistic background, their results were not part of the analyses. Therefore, the subject group consisted of 142 pupils. According to sex, there were 82 boys and 60 girls. According to age level (grade), grade 5 (± 9 yrs) had 69 pupils and grade 8 (± 12 yrs) consisted of 73 pupils.

2.2 *Measurement techniques*

There are various direct and indirect techniques for the measurement of language attitudes (Knops, 1983). Each technique has its specific pros and cons and it may therefore be wise to use both direct and indirect techniques. The present study makes use of a Likert scale and of the matched-guise technique. The use of different methods can result in complementary data on the conscious evaluation of language (Likert scale) and on the sub-conscious evaluation of language groups (matched-guise) as well.

2.2.1 *Likert scale*

The pupils responded to ten test items; three 4-pnt scales and seven 5-pnt scales. The items dealt with Frisian at school (as a subject and as a medium of instruction, two items), with the oral use of Frisian (two items), with the symbolic value of Frisian (two items), with a global evaluation of Frisian (two items), with Frisian on TV and with pupils feelings of ethnicity.
An item analysis was conducted. This revealed that all items correlated highly with the total item score ($p<.01$). Therefore, the mean attitude score was based on all items. Cronbach's alpha was .88, so the scale was fairly reliable.
The minimum score was one, and the maximum score (because of the three 4-pnt scales) was 4.7 (*1). A high score implies a negative attitude towards Frisian whereas a low score indicates a positive language attitude.

2.2.2 *Matched-guise*

By means of the matched-guise technique, one can indirectly measure respondents attitudes towards (speakers of) specific language groups. Characteristic for this technique is that

subjects evaluate fragments of spoken language. They think to judge the speaker, but in fact the language (variety) is evaluated. Much research has shown that language (varieties) are evaluated for at least two dimensions: status (or prestige) and solidarity (cf. Ryan, 1979).
The pupils listened in class to four recorded samples of spoken language. Two (male) speakers each read the same text two times (in Dutch and in Frisian). The text dealt with a neutral subject, the weather.
The four language fragments were presented in two different sequences. The presentation of the fragments was structured as follows:

	order 1				order 2			
- speaker	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
- language	Fr	Fr	Du	Du	Du	Du	Fr	Fr

Only the evaluations of speaker B have been analysed. The speaker was evaluated on 15 scales, which were mainly adopted from Kerkhoff (1988). Next to 11 personality traits, an estimation of the speaker's profession was asked for, whereby the answer categories varied from garbage collector to doctor. Finally, there were three items which referred to the social attractiveness of the speaker: 'Would you like to have this man as your teacher-father-neighbour'?
The difference scores have been calculated between the evaluations of the Dutch and Frisian fragment. These scores have been factor analysed (varimax rotation) in order to detect the underlying dimensions of judgement.

2.2.3 *Cloze test*

In order to measure pupils' general command of the Frisian language, a cloze test was administered to the pupils in grade 5. The cloze test was in multiple-choice format, whereby the children had to choose between four answer categories. The text dealt with a neutral topic: a hedgehog. Each 8th word was left out of the text. The test included 25 items.

3. RESULTS

The results of direct and indirect attitude measurement will be presented in section 3.1 and 3.2 respectively. The outcomes of both techniques will be related to one another in section 3.3. Finally, the relation between language attitudes and (second) language proficiency will be touched upon in section 3.4.

3.1 *Likert scale*

The ANOVA with language attitude as dependent variable and linguistic background, sex and age level (grade) as independent variables, gave the following result (*2).

Table 1: ANOVA language attitude score

factor	Ss	Df	F	p
linguistic background (LB)	31.40	1	67.91	<.001
sex (SX)	.73	1	1.57	n.s
age level (AL)	.99	1	2.15	n.s
LB x SX	.00	1	.00	n.s
LB x AL	2.10	1	4.54	<.05
SX x AL	2.23	1	4.82	<.05
LB x SX x AL	.00	1	.00	n.s

The table reveals that there is one strong main effect for linguistic background. The mean attitude scores for Frisian and Dutch speaking pupils were 2.47 and 3.49 respectively. On the bases of these figures, one can conclude that the Dutch speaking pupils are quite negative towards Frisian, whereas the Frisian speaking pupils seem to have a neutral attitude towards their own language.
Moreover, there were two significant interaction effects (LB x AL and SX x AL), which will be worked out in the following table.

Table 2: mean language attitude scores by linguistic background and age level, and by sex and age level

linguistic background	age level	X	(n)
Frisian	5	2.29	45
Frisian	8	2.63	50
Dutch	5	3.55	22
Dutch	8	3.43	23

sex	age level	X	(n)
boys	5	2.79	43
boys	8	2.59	37
girls	5	2.55	24
girls	8	3.17	36

Table 2 shows that the interaction effect between linguistic background and age level is mainly caused by the Frisian speaking pupils' attitude scores. They score significantly higher in grade 8 than in grade 5 ($t = -2.33$, $p < .05$). This means that the Frisian speaking pupils' attitude is significantly less favourable towards Frisian in the higher grade.
The interaction effect between sex and age level is chiefly caused by the girls' scores. They score much higher in grade 8 than in grade 5 ($t = -3.54$, $p < .01$), and thus display a less positive attitude towards Frisian in the higher grade.

3.2 *Matched-guise*

Factor analysis was carried out on the difference scores between the Dutch and Frisian fragments. The factor matrix displayed the following two factor solution, which was indeed interpretable.

Table 3: rotated factor matrix

item number		factor 1 (SOL)	factor 2 (STAT)
(2)	unsociable-sociable	.79*	.07
(4)	unfriendly-friendly	.71*	.17
(6)	dishonest-honest	.57*	.20
(9)	boring-amusing	.63*	-.11
(11)	unpleasant-pleasant	.71*	.00
(1)	stupid-bright	.37	.52*
(5)	lazy-diligent	-.04	.63*
(8)	unimportant-important	.06	.65*
(14)	garbage-doctor collector	-.06	.51*
(3)	untidy-neat	.06	.26
(7)	teacher	.35	.27
(10)	poor-rich	-.02	.02
(12)	common-posh	.05	.18
(13)	father	.28	-.03
(15)	neighbour	.42	.45
eigenwaarde		3.69	2.04
explained variance		38 %	

[* = >.50]

The third and fourth factor which the analysis produced is left out of the analyses, as the explained variance of these factors was quite minimal (<10 %).
The items 2, 4, 6, 9 and 11 load on factor one, which will be denoted as 'solidarity'. The items 1, 5, 8 and 14 load on factor two, which is designated as the 'status' factor.
Factor scores (SOL and STAT) have been calculated by determining the average of the items that load on the respective factors. Separate analyses of variance (ANOVA) have then been carried out on the factor scores. Because the difference scores were based on the difference between the evaluation of the Dutch and the Frisian fragments of the same speaker, a positive difference score (on SOL and/or STAT) reflects a more favourable evaluation of the Dutch language. In contrast, a negative difference score stands for a judgement to the advantage of the Frisian language.

3.2.1 *Solidarity*

Firstly it turned out that the children generally do not attach a significantly higher solidarity value to the Frisian language than to Dutch. The mean solidarity scores for all children on the Frisian and the Dutch fragment were 3.67 and 3.53 respectively (n= 139; t= 1.57, n.s.).
The following table gives more precise information about the childrens' solidarity judgement. The table contains the results of the ANOVA which was carried out on the SOL difference scores.

Table 4: ANOVA SOL scores

factor	Ss	Df	F	p
linguistic background (LB)	1.43	1	1.29	n.s
sex (SX)	.06	1	.05	n.s
age level (AL)	.04	1	.04	n.s
LB x SX	.53	1	.48	n.s
LB x AL	6.13	1	5.55	<.05
SX x AL	2.53	1	2.29	n.s
LB x SX x AL	.32	1	.29	n.s

We find no main effects, not even for linguistic background. There is an interaction effect between linguistic background and age level. Therefore, the following table includes in addition the mean SOL scores by linguistic background and age level.

Table 5: mean SOL scores, by linguistic background and age level

linguistic background	age level	X	(n)
Frisian	5	-.36	46
Frisian	8	-.08	49
Dutch	5	.35	22
Dutch	8	-.34	22

The Frisian speaking pupils in grade 5 attach significantly more solidarity value to the Frisian language than to Dutch (t= 2.21, p<.05). In grade 8, however, the Frisian speaking pupils' evaluation of the solidarity value of both languages does not differ significantly (t= .56, n.s.). All this suggests that the Frisian speaking pupils have lost feelings of solidarity towards their own language at the end of the primary school period.
The Dutch speaking pupils at both age levels do not display a statistically significant difference in the solidarity value of Frisian and Dutch. Interestingly, however, Dutch speaking pupils evaluated the solidarity value of Frisian differently in grade 5 and 8. Their mean difference scores were .35 and -.34 respectively (t= 2.11, p<.05), which may indicate that the older Dutch speaking pupils start to appreciate the solidarity value of the Frisian language.

3.2.2 *Status*

Firstly it turned out that the children generally attach a significantly higher status value to the Dutch language than to Frisian. The mean status scores for all children on the Dutch and Frisian fragment were 3.50 and 3.28 respectively (n= 141; t= -2.69, p<.01).
An ANOVA was also carried out on the status difference scores. The following table shows the results.

Table 6: ANOVA STAT scores

factor	Ss	Df	F	P
linguistic background (LB)	1.67	1	1.84	n.s
sex (SX)	4.3	1	4.78	<.05
age level (AL)	.16	1	.18	n.s
LB x SX	.25	1	.28	n.s
LB x AL	1.47	1	1.63	n.s
SX x AL	.74	1	.82	n.s
LB x SX x AL	2.19	1	2.42	n.s

The table reveals that there were no significant interaction effects regarding the status factor. However, there was a main effect for the sex variable. Boys judge the relative status of the Frisian language notably lower than girls (mean difference scores resp. .36 and .03).

3.3 *Relation between direct and indirect measurement*

In order to investigate the possible relation between direct and indirect measurement, correlations between the outcomes of both measurement techniques have been calculated. The following table gives the results.

Table 7: Pearson's r for correlations between direct language attitude score (DIR), SOL and STAT (n=136)

	DIR	SOL	STAT
DIR	1	.26**	.21*
SOL		1	.24*

[*= p<.01; **= p<.001]

The table shows that the results of direct measurement (DIR) significantly correlates with both indirect attitude indices (SOL and STAT). This means that accordingly as DIR is negative, there is less solidarity attached to Frisian and there is more value attached to the status of Dutch.
Moreover, both indirect attitude measurements correlate significantly. This means that a low solidarity judgement of Frisian generally goes with a high status judgement of Dutch.

3.4 *Relation between language attitudes and language proficiency*

It turned out that the Frisian speaking pupils in grade 5 (n=44) performed better on the cloze test than the Dutch speaking pupils (n=20). The mean number of errors for both groups were 8.1 and 11.5 respectively (25 items). This relatively high number of errors for both groups of children indicates that pupils' measured general language proficiency was fairly poor.
In order to check whether language attitudes and (second) language

proficiency are related to one another, the correlation between attitude measures and cloze test scores were calculated. The following table describes the outcomes.

Table 8: Pearson's r between attitude measurements and cloze test scores, for Frisian and Dutch speaking pupils (grade 5)

	cloze score (Fr. pupils)	cloze score (Du. pupils)
Likert	-.02	.43*
SOL	.18	-.03
STAT	.11	-.21

[*= p<.05]

It turns out that none of the indirect attitude measurements relates to (second) language proficiency. The direct attitude measurement (Likert scale) also does not relate to the Frisian speaking pupils' measured command of their first language. Interestingly, however, it correlates significantly with the Dutch speaking pupils' second language proficiency. The direction of the correlation is positive. This means that to the extent that the Dutch speaking pupils' attitude towards Frisian is favourable, they perform better on the cloze test.

4. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Giles et al. (1987) conclude that empirical studies have put forward a generally consistent pattern regarding the evaluation of standard versus non standard languages. A standard variety is most often associated with status, while non standard languages accrue less prestige. On the other hand standard speakers are, in some contexts, downgraded on solidarity traits vis-a-vis their non standard counterparts.

Broadly speaking, the results of the present study underline the above mentioned pattern. The pupils generally upgraded the Dutch language on the status dimension, while the Frisian language was only upgraded on solidarity traits by the younger Frisian speaking pupils. Once again, the findings clarify that primary school children are already able to evaluate language varieties on different dimensions of judgement.

The first aim of the study was to relate the children's language attitudes to their linguistic background. The direct measurement revealed that the linguistic background of the home provided a potent source of influence on attitude towards Frisian. The Frisian speaking children displayed a neutral attitude towards their own language, whereas the Dutch speaking children were strikingly negative. The results of the indirect measurement may partly explain why the pupil's linguistic background plays such a determining role. On the whole, the children acknowledge the high status value of the Dutch language. With the (younger) Frisian speaking pupils this favourable status judgement of the standard language is counterbalanced by the higher solidarity value which they attach to their mother tongue. This counterbalancing mechanism does not take effect with the Dutch speaking pupils. The finding that home language is such a decisive factor is in agreement with the attitudinal pattern found among the inhabitants of the province. Research has shown that, in relative terms, the attitude towards Frisian among the non-Frisian section of the population is negative, while it is positive among the Frisians themselves (Gorter et al., 1988; Gorter and Ytsma, 1988). The unequal position which Frisian and Dutch clearly have in the province give rise to differing social conventions within the Dutch and Frisian speech communities, and the language attitudes form a reflexion of these conventions (cf. Giles et al., 1987:585). The results of the present study indicate that school children enculturate in their own speech community at an early age.

Looking at age differences, the second aim of the study, the direct measurement revealed among other things that Frisian speaking pupils' attitudes towards their own language became less favourable as they grew older. On the whole, this is in agreement with Day's (1982) conclusion that minority children first acquire positive attitudes towards their home language, but later display less favourable attitudes.

In the Frisian case, this developmental pattern has not so much to do with the 'discovery' at an older age of the standard language's status value, for the status value of Dutch is already recognized at an early age. In contrast, the pattern might predominantly be based on a shift in the Frisian language's solidarity value, for the just mentioned counterbalancing effect of a high solidarity value seems to fade away as the minority child grows older.

Regarding the relation between the children's sex and their attitudes towards Frisian, the main finding was that boys judge the relative status of the Frisian language notably lower than girls. This outcome is rather surprising if one bears in mind that most often women are found to be more conscious of status differences than men (Trudgill, 1974: p. 93). Perhaps the boy's low status evaluation of the minority language can shed light on other reported research findings whereby girls were more in favour of the minority language than boys (e.g. Jones, 1949/1950).

Children's language attitudes may have mediating implications for their language acquisition. The results of the present study prudently indicate that primary school children's attitudes towards the minority language are related to the acquisition of Frisian as a second language, perhaps specially because Frisian has relatively little instrumental value. This finding may be relevant for the form and content of minority language education. Therefore, further research into the relevance of social psychological variables to the acquisition of the minority language is desperately needed, both for practical and scientific reasons.

notes:

1) The maximum language attitude score (4.7) was the result of the three 4-pnt scales: (3*4)+(7*5)/10= 4.7

2) The cel frequencies were unequal and therefore the research design was not fully experimental. To support the interpretation of the effects, a second ANOVA was carried out for each dependent variable, whereby the cel frequencies were equalized at random. The outcomes of these ANOVA's did not lead to reconsideration of the earlier interpretations, as the effects were completely identical to those of the first analyses.

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